AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method for applying a coating to a surface of an item, said method comprising:

providing a die having a cavity and an aperture, said aperture having a collection surface and ~~a parallel~~ interior wall surfaces;

providing a substantially rigid item for coating, wherein a cross-sectional configuration of said item corresponds to a cross-sectional configuration of said interior wall surfaces ~~aperture of said die~~;

feeding a coating material into said cavity of said die;

using said collection surface as a receiving channel that collects said coating material in said cavity for application onto a surface of said item; ~~and~~

applying said coating material to said surface of said item by passing said item through said coating material in said cavity; and

using said interior wall surfaces to form a uniform and consistent layer of coating material on ~~said aperture of said die, wherein said parallel surface is parallel to said surface of~~ said item and to achieve a consistent exterior finish of said coating material where said coating is applied to said item.

2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of heating at least a portion of said item to a temperature greater than ambient temperature.

3. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of treating at least a portion of said substantially rigid item.

4. (previously presented) The method of claim 3, wherein said step of treating comprises at least one of :

(i) applying a high pressure steam cleaning to said item;

(ii) applying a high pressure air cleaning to said item;

(iii) applying a solvent cleaning to said item;

(iv) applying a water bath cleaning to said item;

(v) cooling said item;

(vi) stacking said item; and

(vii) cutting said item into desired lengths.

5. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said providing a substantially rigid item further comprises providing a plurality of substantially rigid non-continuous items for passing in series through said cavity and said ~~aperature~~ aperture of said die.

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein said heating said item further comprises heating said item to a temperature substantially greater than said ambient temperature to promote a bond with said coating material.

7. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said uniform and consistent layer of coating material ~~applying said coating material to said surface of said item comprises coating said item with said coating material such that said coating material~~ comprises a

substantially uniform thickness in the range of 0.001 inches to 0.250 inches on said surface of said item.

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said coating material comprises at least one of (i) an acrylic, (ii) a poly-vinyl chloride (P.V.C.), (iii) an A.B.S., (iv) a polyesters, polypropylene, (v) an A.S.A., and (vi) a nylon.

9. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said coating material comprises a thermal plastic.

10. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said coating material comprises a pigmentation.

11. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said coating material comprises an absence of pigmentation.

12. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said passing said item through said coating material in said cavity and said aperture is an automated process.

13. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said passing said item through said coating material in said cavity and said aperture is a manual process.

14. (currently amended) A method for applying a coating material to one or more of a plurality of items in series, said method comprising:

providing a two-part die having a cavity and an aperture, said aperture having a collection surface and ~~a parallel~~ interior wall surfaces;

providing a non-continuous, substantially rigid item for coating, wherein a cross-sectional configuration of said item corresponds to a cross-sectional configuration of said ~~aperture of said die~~ interior wall surfaces;

feeding a coating material into said cavity of said die;

using said collection surface as a receiving channel that collects said coating material in said cavity for application onto a surface of said item; ~~and~~

applying said coating material to said surface of said item by passing said item through said coating material in said cavity; and

using said interior wall surfaces to ensure a uniform and consistent layer of coating material on ~~said aperture of said die, wherein said parallel surface is parallel to said surface of~~ said item and to achieve a consistent exterior finish of said coating material where said coating is applied to said item.

15. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising a step of pre-treating said substrate.

16. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said step of pre-treating is comprises at least one of (i) applying a high pressure steam cleaning to said item, (ii) applying a high pressure air cleaning to said item, (iii) providing a solvent cleaning to said item, (iv)

providing a water bath cleaning to said item, (v) cooling said item, and (vi) cutting said item into desired lengths.

17. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said non-continuous item comprises a plurality of discrete item lengths, each discrete item length having a substantially identical cross-sectional configuration.

18. (previously presented) The method of claim 17, wherein said passing said item further comprises passing each of said discrete item lengths through said cavity and said aperture of said die in series.

19. (cancelled)

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said uniform and consistent layer of coating material ~~step of applying said coating material further~~ comprises ~~applying~~ a substantially uniform thickness of said coating material in the range of 0.001 inches to 0.250 inches on ~~said surface of~~ said item.

21. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said coating material comprises at least one of (i) an acrylic, (ii) a poly-vinyl chloride (P.V.C.), (iii) an A.B.S., (iv) a polyester, (v) a polypropylene, (vi) an A.S.A., and (vii) a nylon.

22. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said coating material comprises a thermal plastic.

23. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said coating material comprises a pigmentation.

24. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said coating material comprises an absence of pigmentation.